

## A FRAMEWORK FOR THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING

Many books have been written about theories in nursing (for example, Barnum, 1994; Fawcett, 2005; Fitzpatrick & Whall, 1996; Meleis, 2005). Most of these are oriented to the analysis and critique of theories by adopting certain criteria for identifying theoretical assumptions, distinguishing contents, and evaluating the maturity, completeness, and logic of theory. In general, theories and theoretical frameworks are examined with respect to different components and aspects related to them. These are as follows:

1. Theoretical Perspectives—provides insights to the theory's worldviews and angle of vision regarding the phenomena of interest from the conceptual, ontological, and epistemological orientations
2. Basic Assumptions and Premises—further illuminates the theory's orientations regarding how one is to understand and explain nursing phenomena
3. Concepts and Their Definitions—specifies major concepts used in the theory and their conceptualizations
4. Theoretical Structure and Statements—specifies the form of theory and its structure and the nature of theoretical statements developed for the theory
5. Chronological Order of Progression—provides an understanding regarding the order with which a given theory has progressed over time
6. Theorist(s) and Major Proponents—provides insights into the theorist's scientific orientations that undergird the theory development

Comprehending nursing theories require multifaceted approaches, beginning with a descriptive understanding of theories, which comes from a thorough reading of original work. From this initial understanding, one can move toward a critical understanding based on analysis and evaluation of a given theory in terms of what it proposes as well as the foundation from which its proposals originate. It further involves a strategic understanding through which one can gain an appreciation of the processes of theory development and the background under which a given theory has emerged. This can be done by analysis of a given theory's evolutionary progression and through an in-depth understanding of the philosophical and theoretical commitments of